

### What to do with the Christmas Tree

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you take your Christmas tree apart and put it in a box back in the attic you can just sort of doze out now. But if you have a REAL Christmas tree, it'll soon be time to take it down, and out of the house. Sigh..... The saddest thing that I see every year are people that put their tree on the curb for the sanitation crews to pick up. You see your old Christmas tree is a valuable resource that shouldn't be wasted. Personally, my tree goes out back and laid on the ground next to the bird feeders. This provides shelter and protection for the birds from weather and predators. Some people will tie their tree upright to a nearby tree but I just lay it down. Some folks who have access to a chipper will turn their Christmas tree into mulch, very nice smelling mulch I might add, and add a little extra mulch to a flower bed or to protect tender perennials. Even if you don't have a chipper, you can cut off the branches and lay those around and over tender perennials. If you have a wood stove or an outdoor fireplace, the branches can make great kindling. With all the resin they pop and spark too much to use in an open fireplace though. The last option is to use them for wildlife habitat away from your bird feeders if you have a larger property. Locally the Geary County Fish and Game has historically collected them for wildlife habitat. I have not heard for sure where the collection point will be so just keep listening here or reading the newspaper. Remember that the trees need to have all decorations removed prior to taking them to the collection area. And please no yard waste! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Landscape maturity

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was driving down the street in my neighborhood the other day and was thinking about the concept of landscape maturity.

Landscapes age and mature just like people do. As the landscape matures some plants need to be removed for various reasons, but to get a landscape to look well established, or mature as I like to say, it takes time. You can't make an instantly mature landscape. Some landscaping firms do try to make it look that way from the start by really packing in a lot of plants. If you do this then sure, you will have a very full looking landscape very quickly, but five years down the road you've got a plant management nightmare as shrubs are growing into each other and need a ton of pruning or simply some of them removed. Homeowners try to buy the biggest tree that they can or plant a fast growing tree and they just create headaches. Large transplanted trees are prone to a great deal of transplant stress and then they tend to just sit there and do very little visible growing for several years as the root system tries to get balanced with the above ground portions. If you plant a super fast growing elm or maple, in a matter of years you've got a big tree that's a very weak tree and prone to wind or ice damage. Start with a smaller tree that will grow into a nice strong tree. Landscape maturity takes time, you can't rush it. You can't have instant mature plants. No matter how hard you try. You have to start with a solid plan and then be patient or you'll spend more time dealing with issues. Remember, we plant trees for the next generation to enjoy! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

How does winter damage happen?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With cold weather settling in finally (sorry, we do need cold weather for at least some of the winter), homeowners occasionally worry about damage and especially what we call winter kill. Many homeowners assume that damage to landscape plants occurs because of HOW cold it gets. In reality, winterkill is a broad term that we use to refer to any environmentally caused damage to plants from about mid October to the first of May. While we may call it winterkill, cold temperatures in and of themselves, are rarely the real problem. Yes, we will put plants in our landscape that are only marginally adapted to our climate. If it gets cold enough, crape myrtle WILL freeze back to the ground. Then it comes back. We have a lot of winterkill that is often nothing more than dehydration. Damage to blue spruces is one case of this. Actually, any plant that holds green foliage all through the winter can experience damage from dry soils. That's why when we have dry conditions like we've been seeing in recent months we encourage you to water your spruce and other evergreens on warm winter days. Finally, we can see serious damage when short periods of warm weather in winter are followed by return to normal weather. The warm weather gets sap flowing and then cold weather returns freezing the sap and bursting the transport vessels in the bark. Maples are probably the worst for this and why we often see small red or sugar maple trees with damage on the southwest side of the trunk. So yes, like all years, we will probably see some damage this winter. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## A Gardener's New Year's Resolutions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I love making new year's resolutions... for everyone else! Gosh knows I don't need to change anything because I'm per... okay, we'd better not go there! So let me toss out a few resolutions for the coming year and feel free to adopt any of them yourself. I resolve to not overwater my lawn and only water it enough to keep it alive and a little green. I further resolve to never mow my fescue lawn shorter than three inches. I resolve to plant only trees that are well adapted to our Kansas climate not falling for the bait of impatience and planting a fast growing tree like a silver maple or poplar. I know that these trees will quickly develop problems from wind and ice damage so will only plant trees with moderate to slow growth rates. I further resolve not to plant popular trees that are fraught with problems like blue spruce. I will also spend more time studying and understanding our Kansas climate and weather so that I better understand why these are such bad choices. I resolve to not try to fit more into my vegetable garden than I have room for or my family and friends will eat. I will take the time to ask my family what vegetables they like to eat and then read the K-State garden planning bulletin so I know what is a reasonable amount to plant for the size of my family. I will take the time to lay my garden out to scale and place plants at the recommended distance so that I can allow room for good air movement to keep foliage dry so they won't get diseases and to allow me room to move through the garden for weeding and harvesting. Okay, feel free to use any of these! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Only 4 radio programs this week

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent.

**Because of holiday programming on KJCK, there were only four Gardening with Chuck programs this week.**

This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.